



Left Roman territories. Rome built a network of alliances, colonies and conquered lands in Italy during the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE.



Above A Samnite warrior from the 6th or 5th century BCE. He is fully protected with chest and leg armor. The Romans copied the idea of the long rectangular shield from these Samnites.

GOVERNMENT BY ELECTIONS

The Romans called their new form of government *respublica* (our word "republic"). It literally meant "a matter for the people," and that was what the government was. Each year two officials called consuls were elected by the citizens.

Consuls had much the same power as kings and were heads of government and in charge of the army. However, they were in office for only a year and had to agree with each other about what to do.

Other officials were brought in to do the other jobs of government. Praetors were chief judges; censors kept the register of citizens who could vote; quaestors looked after the state's finances; and aediles were in charge of all public works. The senate, made up of ex-officials, formed a parliament which discussed matters of state and advised the officials.

CITIZENS AND CONQUEST

The Roman people were divided into "classes." The patricians were the noble families who traced their origins back to early Rome. The plebeians were the ordinary working people. They could vote but could not hold high office such as the consulship. Later a new class emerged, the *equites* ("knights"), who were property-owning business men.

Although the state was a republic, and the system of government was democracy, not everyone could vote: slaves and women were excluded.

At first the new Roman state had friendly relations with its neighbors. Gradually, though, the Romans forced them to become part of their state – sometimes simply by conquering them. In this way a pattern of expansion began that would produce one of the world's greatest empires, which eventually would include about 60 million people.